How Washington Won His Spurs

An Account of the Early Career of the Man Whose Every Step In Life Is of Interest to Americans

By H. ADDINGTON BRUCE

IN a spacious room, high beamed and glowing with the warmth of a cheerily blazing open fire, two men sat talking. As men will after the cares of the day, they talked on topics of indifferent interest, leisurely, quietly. But a chance word brought up a serious subject.

"Yes, yes, William," said one, with a shade of annoyance in his tone, "I know that the matter must be arranged speedily, but where are we to find a competent man—a man of the necessary executive ability and whom we may trust?"

"Near at hand, Thomas." And a quizzical smile accompanied the reply. "I fancy he's visiting Mount Vernon now."

"Not young George Washington?"

"Precisely—young George Washington. I warrant you the boy has the makings of a fine man. He's strong, active, tireless, and has a brain to match his body."

"But he is only a boy—not yet sixteen, I believe—and this is work for a man, not for a boy. Besides, what experience can he boast?"

"Experience?" the other laughed. "Why, bless you, Thomas, if you had seen as much of him as I have you'd grant he had experience. He's forever at work, measuring here, calculating there. The lad is a born surveyor. Only the other day," and the speaker chuckled, "I found him busily engaged in surveying—never can you guess it—in surveying Lawrence's turnip field. His brother has a world of faith in him, and so have I."

SURVEYING LAWRENCE'S TURNIP FIELD.

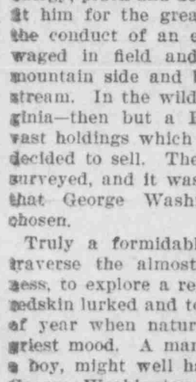
There was a moment's pause, then:

"Very well, William, let us consider him engaged. Please notify him that the sooner he musters his party and starts out the better pleased I shall be."

Thus did two gentlemen of Virginia — Thomas, Lord Fairfax, and William, his cousin and confidential agent—reach a decision fraught with tremendous consequences to themselves, to George Washington and to America. For the mission with which they were intrusting the lad from the Rappahannock was exactly that best calculated to develop in him the sterling qualities of self control, energy, pluck and determination and to fit him for the great task of his life, the conduct of an epoch making war waged in field and forest, on steep mountain side and by swiftly flowing stream. In the wildest section of Virginia—then but a British colony—lay vast holdings which Lord Fairfax had decided to sell. They had never been surveyed, and it was to plat them out that George Washington had been chosen.

Truly a formidable undertaking to traverse the almost pathless wilderness, to explore a region in which the redskin lurked and to do this at a time of year when nature was in her angriest mood. A man, and much more a boy, might well have faltered. But George Washington was no ordinary boy. Physically he was well developed for his age. Though little more than midway through his teens he was already famed as the finest rider in a section that was celebrated for its horsemen. At fencing, running, jumping, he could worst any lad of his years, and mentally he was, as William Fairfax had suggested, exceptionally equipped.

Consequently it is easier to imagine than describe the elation he felt when he heard of his appointment. Eagerly he made all preparations and early in March, 1748, struck out from Belvoir, William Fairfax's magnificent country place, to cross the Blue Ridge and begin his labors in the valleys of the Alleghenies. He started in a pouring rain, and the farther he went the harder it rained. And he soon found other inconveniences of a more disagreeable type. The first night the party slept at an inn, where George, as he tells us in the journal a happy fortune has preserved for posterity, found in way of a bed only a heap of straw covered with but one "thread Bear blanket with double its weight of Vermin such as Lice, Fleas, etc."



IN A POURING RAIN.

But nothing could daunt his spirit, and, despite the continued rains, the swollen streams and the terrific winds that more than once leveled his tent to the ground, he was constantly in the field, because, to quote his own words, "our time was too precious to lose." Out bright and early with chains and instruments, he worked till night and then sought what repose he could find. Occasionally when the party reached some remote settlement there were feasting and merrymaking, but this was an exception to the general rule of hard and prolonged toil. We find him writing to a chum:

"Dear Richard—Yours gave me pleasure, as I received it among barbarians and an uncouth set of people. Since you received my letter I have not slept above three or four nights in a bed, but after walking a great deal all the day I have lain down before the fire upon a little hay, straw, fodder or a bearskin, whichever was to be had, with men, wife and children, like dogs and cats, and happy is he who gets the berth nearest the fire."

NO MATCH FOR HIM.

Here was a stern but invaluable apprenticeship, and it is good to be able to record that he acquitted himself so creditably that, his first mission accomplished, Lord Fairfax found other work for him to do, retaining him in his employ until his surveying days were at an end. Now, too, he was given opportunity to indulge in the manly sports so dear to his virile nature, for his duties became such that he was able to reside in one place for months at a time At Frederick, for example, he boarded in the house of a widow named Stinson, who had seven sons, each a veritable Hercules if tradition is to be accepted. Near by was another family of lusty youths, Crawford by name. Every evening when the day's work was done the Stinsons, the Crawfords and George would meet in a large open space before the Stinson house and engage in trials of strength and skill. The others were far heavier than Washington, and in wrestling he was no match for them. As Hugh Stinson when an old man used to recall, "Often have I laid the conqueror of England on his back." But he was always quick to add, "Yet in running and leaping I and the rest were no match for him."

It is pleasant to note that, twenty-five years after the bouts at Frederick, when he was called on to lead the Continental army against King George's host, Washington's thoughts went back to the friends of his hard but happy youth, and, knowing their worth, he lost no time in offering them commissions. Several among them accepted his offer, and one, William Crawford, won his way to the rank of colonel and would doubtless have been still further promoted had he not fallen into the hands of hostile Indians and been burned at the stake.

In such wise, meeting and overcoming the difficulties of the wilderness, did George Washington prove his mettle and gain knowledge that stood him in the best of stead in his after life as a military commander. Only till 1751, his twentieth year, did he follow the profession of surveyor. Then, on news of trouble with the Indians along the frontier, he laid aside the compass for the sword and entered on the career that was to enshrine him forever in the hearts of his fellow countrymen.

How Washington Looked.

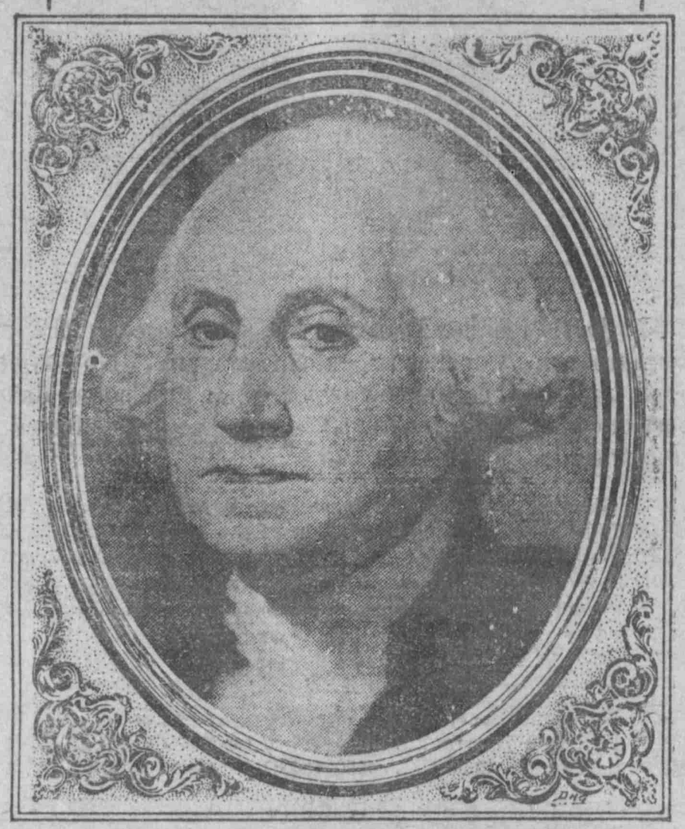
Washington was six feet two inches in height. His hair was brown, his eyes blue and rather cold, his skin clear and ruddy. His nose was prominent. In youth he was slender, but during his service in the army he weighed 200 pounds. His hands and feet were enormous. His boots were No. 13. He was broad, though not deep chested, and exceedingly strong. He could lift with one hand a tent folded about the tent poles which usually took two men to put it into a baggage wagon. He could hold a musket in one hand and fire it. His taste in clothes was plain, but fastidious. He was very careful about his personal appearance. He never wore beard or mustache and acted as his own barber. In his old age he wore false teeth, which gave to his face in the later portraits a severity of expression absent in the earlier and probably more truthful likenesses. Stuart's portraits of Washington are somewhat idealized. Portraits by Trumbull and Sharpless are considered faithful in most respects, while that painted by Joseph Wright in 1782 was highly approved by Washington himself. The Houdon statue at Richmond has generally been accepted as the most accurate image of the first president.

The Chorus Of the Years

By ARTHUR J. BURDICK

LONG, loud and clear the chorus swells—
The voices of the years.
Each ringing with achievement grand
And calling to the spheres
To look and view
One loyal, true,
Who snatched from Tyranny a land—
The fairest neath the sun—
And started Progress on her way:
Brave, noble Washington.

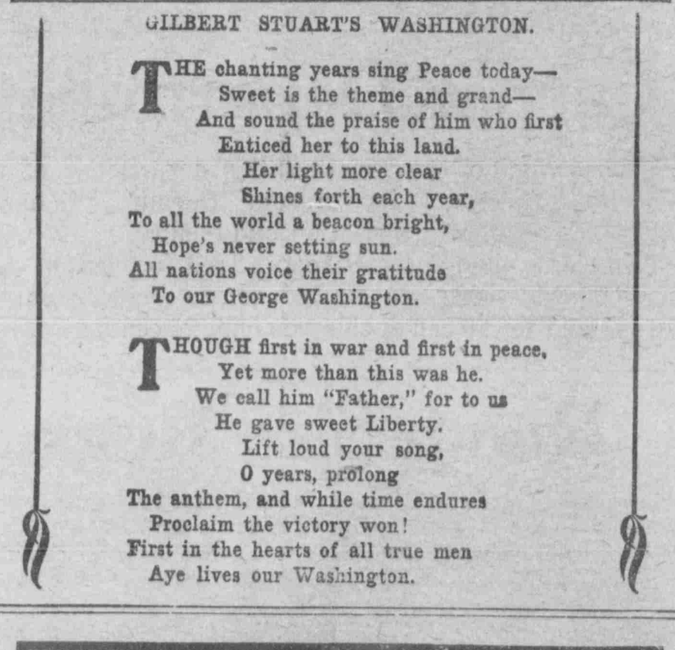
IN him War found a champion
Courageous, dauntless, true.
His heart of steel was tender, too,
And sympathy it knew.
And friend and foe,
When lying low,
Alike to him were brother men,
His fellows, every one.
War was but Mercy's path when led
The soldier, Washington.



GILBERT STUART'S WASHINGTON.

THE chanting years sing Peace today—
Sweet is the theme and grand—
And sound the praise of him who first
Enticed her to this land.
Her light more clear
Shines forth each year,
To all the world a beacon bright,
Hope's never setting sun.
All nations voice their gratitude
To our George Washington.

THOUGH first in war and first in peace,
Yet more than this was he.
We call him "Father," for to us
He gave sweet Liberty.
Lift loud your song,
O years, prolong
The anthem, and while time endures
Proclaim the victory won!
First in the hearts of all true men
Aye lives our Washington.



HOUDON'S DEATH MASK OF WASHINGTON.

His Little Hatchet— How He Used It

The Story of a Courtship That Hung Fire, but Was Brought to a Satisfactory Conclusion on Washington's Birthday

By JEROME SPRAGUE

ALL the world was white, and the snow was still coming down. The wind drifted it into corners and piled it up on the bare branches of the trees.

Virginia stood at the window and watched it disconsolately.

"Of course I shall have to have a cab," she said, "or I'll spoil my gown."

"Of course," said the young man who reclined comfortably in a big brown leather chair by the fireplace. "Of course, if you insist on going out."

Virginia whirled around and looked at him scornfully. "Why should I stay at home?" she demanded.

"Because life is too short to risk getting your feet wet and your chiffons damp when you might sit here and talk to me," was the lazy reply.

Virginia, with all her rosy ruffles a-flutter, crossed the room and stood in front of him.

"Would you really want me to stay, Bob," she demanded, "when it is my duty to go? It isn't as if it were an everyday affair, but a Continental dinner to celebrate the birthday of the Father of His Country is a different thing."

"STAY HERE AND TALK TO ME."

"Certainly," her fiance agreed, "but it isn't worth going out in all this storm."

Virginia surveyed him witheringly. "And your great-grandfather was almost frozen at Valley Forge for this."

The young man smiled. "Well, not exactly," he said, "but what's the use, Virginia? Stay here and talk to me and let the world go by."

Her eyes flashed, and at her sharp look Cunningham flushed a little.

"Please telephone for my cab," was her command, and then, as he rose to do her bidding, she came back at him with the announcement: "You can sit by the fire and dream, if you wish. I don't want you to go with me."

He turned and looked at her. "Do you really mean that, Virginia?"

"Yes," she said, "I really mean it."

He telephoned and came back, then in silence they sat, one on each side of the fireplace, waiting.

When at last the cab drove up, he helped her into her fur lined wrap and knelt to put on her carriage boots. When he rose to his feet he asked, "Shall I come for you?"

"No," she informed him. "Mrs. Frelinghuysen will let me come home with her. I need not trouble you to leave the fire."

He laughed a little. "Oh, don't rub it in," he said as he preceded her to the cab.

He stood bareheaded in the snow as the cab drove away, and Virginia's heart gave a little throb of admiration. How very good looking he was, and how lazy! He needed a lesson.

Later she thought of him when the devoted D. A. R.'s, having read papers and sung songs expressive of their patriotism and of their desire to perpetuate the name and fame of their heroic forbears, listened to the speaker of the evening.

Dinner followed, and in a glitter of gorgeousness the daughters trailed upstairs to the dining room. Flags decorated the long hall, rosettes of buff and blue were everywhere, and in the center of the huge table was a cherry tree, at the foot of which lay a shining hatchet tied with red ribbons.

Virginia, with Mrs. Frelinghuysen opposite, and with a famous old admiral on one side and a callow cadet on the other, was bored to extinction.

Her thoughts crept back somewhat longingly to Cunningham, to the bright fire on the hearth and to the big brown leather chair, which since their engagement had come to be called "Bob's own." Her own low wicker one sat close to it.

Mrs. Frelinghuysen and the admiral argued.

"Did you agree with the speaker," asked the stately dame, "that there are few men now like the ones of Washington's time?"

"No," he said somewhat gruffly. "There's nothing to bring it out now, nothing to bring it out. But let the reason come and you'd find that some of our laziest men would be the best fighters."

THE SPLINTERING OF WOOD.

Virginia leaned forward eagerly.

"Do you really think that?" she asked.

The old man nodded.

"Certainly, Miss Cary. Been my experience. I haven't a bit of use for the man who brags. Just get one of those fellows with good blood in him and in times of peace he'll act as if it was an exertion to cross the room, but let war come and he's the one that does the big things."

Virginia began to wonder if she had been hasty in her condemnation of Bob. She wished that she had let him come with her. She wished—and, as if the fairies had heard, she saw Cunningham's fair head in the doorway.

He came straight toward her, and even as she watched him Virginia was aware of a strange commotion in the room. Women were rising from the seats and men were shouting; then chairs crashed as their occupants moved them back in haste and made for the stairway, and over and above all wavered a thin blue banner of smoke.

"Mrs. Frelinghuysen," said Cunningham as he came up, "the building is on fire. I have turned in an alarm, but we must get out at once."

The old officer and the young cadet, each trained to act quickly, sprang to their feet.

"You look out for the other women," Cunningham directed. "I'll take care of Miss Cary."

As they hurried toward the doors a man came running to meet them. "Go to the back stairway," he panted. "There's a perfect stampede on the front. It won't do for another person to pack against that crowd."

The back stairway was long and narrow and at the foot the door was shut and locked.

Cunningham wrenched at the lock, but it held. Then the strong young cadet tried it, and then the old admiral exerted all his force, but still the lock held; and all the time the smoke was growing denser, and they knew that at the head of the stairway the fire was raging, cutting off retreat.

Virginia, overtaken by panic, screamed, but Mrs. Frelinghuysen, stanch even in that moment of great danger, said: "They'll get us out, my dear. Don't worry."

But though Cunningham and the callow cadet and the strong old admiral hurled themselves against the door it held.

"There's a window up there," said the cadet, "we men could climb"—

Cunningham shook his head.

"But the women couldn't," he said, and turned this way and that restlessly. Then suddenly, like a flash, he flew back up the stairway and disappeared into the smoke.

"Oh, coward, coward," Virginia's thoughts condemned, and, as if in answer of her doubt of him, she saw him coming back. In his hand was a shining weapon—the hatchet that had been laid at the foot of the little cherry tree on the table.

"Stand back!" he shouted, and she heard the old admiral say, "Thank God!" She was conscious of the splintering of wood, a rush of outside air, a babel of voices, and then she fainted. When she came to herself she was in a carraige, and Cunningham was bending over her.

"I got you out of that crowd as soon as I could," he said as she opened her eyes. "There were dozens of carriages, and I simply took one."

Virginia clung to him, sobbing, "Oh, Bob, Bob, are you hurt?"

"Nothing that a bandage or two won't help," he said, but his face was drawn with pain. "We'll go back to your house, and in an hour we'll never know the difference."

"WITH MY LITTLE HATCHET."

"Yes, we will know the difference." Virginia sat up and wiped her eyes. "Oh, how brave you are, Bob, and how unjust I was"—

"Oh, cut it out," he said slangily. "No man would hesitate to do a thing like that when a lot of women were in danger, especially the one that he loves better than his life."

Virginia looked at him wistfully.

"Do you really love me," she asked, "after I was so—so—hateful this afternoon?"

His answer was so satisfactory that she was all rosy with blushes when she asked her next question.

"Tell me just how you opened the door."

His eyes twinkled, and then he gave his answer in one immortal sentence:

"I cannot tell a lie, Virginia. I did it with my little hatchet!"

Washington Was a Dandy.

"There can be little doubt that he was in early life a good deal of a dandy," writes the author of "The True George Washington," and he adds that this liking for fine feathers never quite left the great man. Washington's diaries fairly bristle with notes about the fine clothes he frequently ordered.

Washington No Orator.

He was not a speaker, which was perhaps due to actual humility and shyness. On one occasion he attempted to read a short speech, but failed whereupon he remarked, "I have grown blind as well as gray in the service of my country."

that loved her.—Barrow.